



## Historical legacy builds trust

**By Captain Michael Meridith**  
Public affairs

For many people the Cold War is merely a part of history, a span of time that is studied, but has little relevance for their daily lives.

James Bolton, Chief of the 319th Air Refueling Wing's Treaty Compliance Office, would disagree. According to Mr. Bolton, echoes of the Cold War still resonate. In fact, those echoes were strongly heard May 26 when he was informed by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency that a Russian inspection team would be visiting the base; the first such visit since last July.

The visit had one purpose: enforcement of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed between the United States and the former Soviet Union (including Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Ukraine) in 1991. Under the terms of the treaty, these nations agreed to short-notice inspections of designated military facilities.

Before DTRA called Grand Forks, they provided all inspectable locations a heads up message. That prompted Mr. Bolton to begin preparations for an inspection here by notifying base leadership, escorts,

building custodians, and preparing entry lists.

A second phone call officially notifying Grand Forks of an upcoming inspection meant additional activity for Mr. Bolton; including notifying commanders and escorts, preparing an in-brief (required by the treaty), and arranging transportation for the Russian and DTRA teams. The phone call also started another treaty clock: Mr. Bolton had to ensure movement restrictions were in place at certain areas on base within an hour (and under the watchful eyes of Russian satellites). Eight hours later, the Russian team arrived.

"The inspections were pretty detailed and lasted about 18 hours," Mr. Bolton said. "They [the Russian team] can inspect any area that was once identified as Minuteman III-related. Even if a building no longer exists, the area can still be inspected. In fact, if you build something new in the same area, it can be inspected as well."

According to Mr. Bolton, the inspection went well for both parties. He said that success was primarily due to the support of organizations and individuals across the base.

"The Cold War may be over, but these inspections are still important," he said. "They demonstrate that we're both willing to be open and trust each other."



Photo by 2nd Lt. Randi Norton

### Community assistance

Senior Airman Max Langford, 906th Air Refueling Squadron here, shows Arland Rasmussen, West Fargo police chief, how to operate the refueling boom of a KC-135R during an orientation flight for Fargo civic leaders June 16.

## Base, community exercise partnership against terror

**By Capt. Michael Meridith**  
Public affairs

The city of Grand Forks and the base briefly became the front lines of the Global War On Terrorism recently.

In a series of chillingly realistic exercises played out here May 25 and 26, base and community leaders and disaster response personnel came face to face with several frightening scenarios involving the terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction.

According to Master Sgt. David Breon, one of the base exercise planners, the "Code Silver" exercises - as they were dubbed - have been in the works for the last six months.

"We've been planning this for awhile," he said. "Our goal was to learn each other's (the base and community's) capabilities and limitations and find the

best ways to respond as a cohesive unit."

According to Sergeant Breon, that goal was met through the cooperation of dozens of representatives of base and community agencies including the Grand Forks Public Health Department and Sheriff's Office as well as Altru Health Services and the FBI.

"This was probably one of our best cooperative exercises in terms of our partnership with the local community," he added.

According to Capt. David Hampl, base Medical Control Center team chief, the development of a unified command and control structure between the base and community was one of the highlights of Code Silver.

"The cooperative effort is the most important thing," Capt. Hampl said. "We each bring certain strengths to the fight. The community has the infrastructure to support this kind of emergency and we

bring things like decontamination expertise and assets. We complement each other."

Mr. Don Shields, Grand Fork's Public Health Director, echoed those comments and noted though the scenarios were grim, they weren't necessarily far-fetched.

"People here take this [the threat of terrorism] seriously. We know that it can happen at Oklahoma City. We know it can happen at high-visibility events. Plus, we're along an international border. People didn't expect the flood of 1997, but it happened. The bottom line is you have to be aware and you have to prepare," Mr. Shields said.

Like his base counterparts, Mr. Shields praised the opportunity provided by Code Silver. "I see it as a snapshot in time," he said. "We're better prepared because of this exercise and we'll continue to get better each day."

# Warrior sees Iraqi celebration, tragedy

By Senior Airman James Croxon  
Public affairs

News reports from Iraq highlight the struggle between coalition forces and the insurgency. We often hear about American Soldiers and Marines fighting, but there is an Iraq story that hasn't gotten much air time: the story of the Iraqi people, victims of dictatorship and war, working to rebuild their country.

Recently, one Warrior of the North deployed to Iraq to help these people, and in so doing also tested his training in a war zone.

Maj. John Ayres, 319th Comptroller Squadron commander, worked closely with the Iraqis rebuilding their country.

"I worked in the project contracting office," he said. "It's the Department of State entity that is charged with rebuilding Iraq."

Unfortunately, it wasn't as easy as paying a U.S. contractor to repair the damage. The PCO is responsible seeing that local vendors and nationals do as much of the work as possible.

The myriad of projects, which were overseen by the Army Corps of Engineers, were designed to employ as many Iraqis as possible. "A trench that would take a crew of two with heavy equipment to dig stateside takes a few weeks in Iraq with a crew of dozens using shovels," said Major Ayres.

Part of coordinating the work involved meeting with Iraqi vendors outside the green zone. These meetings gave Major Ayres insight into the fears, hopes and culture of the Iraqi people.

"They are some of the warmest people I've met," he said. "Surviving a time when they couldn't trust their neighbors makes them apprehensive of trusting

us, but once they do learn to trust, they talk openly about anything and everything."

One of those topics of discussion was politics, a subject strictly forbidden under the rule of Saddam Hussein but one people were remarkably well educated in. Major Ayres was in Baghdad when the elections took place and got to see Iraqi voters dancing and singing in the streets.

"It was like watching the party after a championship sporting event, only it was as if everyone had played on the winning team," recalled Major Ayres. "They were so proud they wouldn't wash the ink off their hands. I remember seeing purple fingers for days."

As warm as the people were, the fact that he was working in a war zone was constantly evident. "We put mylar over the windows for protection. There was a constant barrage of small arms fire and mortars coming from across the Tigris River rattling our windows every day," he said. "It's amazing what a person can get used to. We ignored most of them, but once in a while we would look up and say 'that was big.'"

The skills Major Ayres learned in pre-deployment training and throughout his career prepared him for the most brutal reminder of war when a 122 mm rocket hit the embassy building he worked in.

"Luckily, the rocket hit a beam, tearing the detonation charge from the warhead." The warhead didn't explode but the detonation charge was enough to claim several lives and leave others wounded.

Major Ayres tended to a wounded co-worker shortly after the attack, saving his life. "All the training kicked in and I treated the man for shock and wounds to his arm and torso."

He said the most important thing he learned dur-

ing his deployment was the need for mental toughness. "Being mentally prepared is key," he said. "There were people staring in disbelief and others who acted."

Despite the attack, Major Ayres said his deployment was a valuable experience that he would do again.

"I've never seen people who were afraid to believe in freedom," he said. "But the people I worked with opened my eyes to the value of the democracy and freedom we take for granted and which they are fighting to make a reality."



Courtesy photo

**Maj. John Ayres, 319th Comptroller Squadron commander here (in helmet), and a co-worker, give candy to Iraqi children during a recent Baghdad deployment. While there, he witnessed celebrations of the country's first free elections and a rocket attack's tragic aftermath.**

## *Base Airmen plan continued adoption of local school*

By Tech. Sgt. Scott T. Sturkol  
Public affairs

Airmen with the 319th Logistics Readiness Squadron fuels management flight adopted the Winship Elementary School in Grand Forks for the 2004-05 school year with plans to continue the effort into the 2005-06 school year.

"The effort started with one of our NCOs who has a child who's a student at the school and he wanted to help out," said Capt. Jonathon DeBelly, flight commander. "Eventually the effort became something the entire flight became involved with."

The NCO whom Captain DeBelly refers to is Tech. Sgt. Lonnie Lloyd, fuels management NCO whose daughter, Jordyn, is a Winship student. The captain said during the past school year nearly 10 Airmen from the flight helped out at school

events.

"Some of the events I went to included a fair and helping out with an essay contest," Captain DeBelly said. "It was a lot of fun to participate and we all plan on continuing the effort."

According to the Winship officials, the fuels Airmen attended all of the school's family events during the school year, took part in lunches with the students, and helped coordinate events and obtain supplies for the school. The most recent effort included the essay contest the captain mentioned at the end of the school year.

"Our Airmen helped judge the contest and handed the prizes to the contest winners," Captain DeBelly said. "It is something we were all very proud to be a part of and look forward to similar efforts in the upcoming school year."

# Base firefighter sets track ablaze

By Senior Airman James Croxon  
Public affairs

Grand Forks Air Force Base Warriors of the North represent the 319th Air Refueling Wing all over the world, most notably by demonstrating excellence in deployed environments. However, one Warrior recently represented the base in a different manner.

Airman 1st Class Angel Romero, a firefighter with the 319th Civil Engineer Squadron, recently competed against athletes from all over the world as part of the Air Force Track Team during a spring European tour.

He competed in the 1,000 meter race in Germany, setting a meet record with a time of 2:34. In Belgium he set another meet record for the 600-meter race and placed second in the 1,600-meter relay. His performance at these meets came after years of training and a twist of fate that brought him into the Air Force and to Grand Forks.

Airman Romero, originally from Southern California, played all the sports he could in high school, including baseball, basketball and football. Then one day, a suggestion from his parents changed his life and his sports career.

"My parents suggested I run track," he said. "I was always fast but track just wasn't something that appealed to me at the time."

However, he gave the suggestion a chance and was greeted by cheers and whistles when he was the first to cross the finish line of one of his early races.

"It was the most amazing feeling I have ever had," he said.

Since that first victory, he has trained continuously to improve his speed. This determination took him to world-class track meets where he has competed against some of the world's best runners.

"I was picked up by the Nike track team early on in my career," he recalled. "Later, I went on to run track for the California Baptist University -- eventually competing in the 2000 and 2004 Olympic track trials."

It was during the 2000 trials that Airman Romero was first exposed to Air Force athletes. "I was beat by a captain who ran for the Air Force as part of its world-class athlete program."

Four years later, after completing his bachelor's degree, Airman Romero tried to get a coaching position at a four-year university. This goal eventually brought him into the Air Force.

"I found out that coaching positions required a master's degree. Unfortunately, I didn't have the time or money to go to graduate school."

Remembering the Airmen he competed against during the Olympic trials, he decided to take advantage of the educational benefits the Air Force offers.

"I initially tried to come into the Air Force as an officer," he said. "But since I was already 27 years

old, I would've had to wait to come onto active duty, so I enlisted into the Air Force in January 2004."

Even though his primary reason for enlisting was to take advantage of the educational benefits, he was committed to challenging himself, and applied for the demanding special operations forces career field.

"Doctors found a hole in my eardrum which prevented me from becoming a special forces member. I thought 'hey, firefighting sounds like an interesting job' and went through firefighter school, eventually coming to Grand Forks.

"North Dakota was a place I never thought I would go," he recalls. "It has its own set of obstacles and perks."

According to Airman Romero, the major obstacle here is the lack of space to run in during the winter. For a man who trains by running between 50 and 100 miles a week, the base fitness center track gets pretty small. "It's hard to make it around corners at a sprint," he joked.

The other obstacle, which actually turned into a perk, is the lack of track meets in the state.

"The Air Force Track team looks at how athletes place to decide whether or not they can run on the team. They looked at me and said, 'we know this guy is fast but he hasn't competed in a few years.'"

However, he soon proved his speed in Europe and is became an official member of the Air Force Track Team.

So what does an Airman do after he gets a spot on the best track team in the military? He goes to the Olympics.

One high point for the Air Force team comes two years before the Olympics. The world-class athlete program is a two-year special duty assignment that gives athletes who meet the criteria the ability to train full-time with who and where they want.

"I would be able to run with my college coach back in Southern California. I'd finally get to compete in track meets against the best runners and represent the Air Force in the Olympics," he said.

*Editor's Note: For more information on the World-Class Athlete Program visit [www.usafsports.com](http://www.usafsports.com).*

## Training for the Olympics

### January-March

Time trials. For the first part of the year Airman Romero concentrates on his speed.

During this training period he works on shaving precious seconds and fractions of seconds off his run time.

He also builds his stamina and strength by running up to 50 miles per week. Instead of splitting up those 50 miles into 10 mile segments five days a week, he runs shorter distances seven days a week.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Patrice Clarke

**Airman 1st Class Angel Romero crosses the finish line in first place during a recent base fun run. He completed the 5K run with a time of 16:30. Romero, who has competed worldwide as a member of the Air Force Track team, has set his sights on Olympic competition.**

### April-June

For the next three months Airman Romero puts even more miles on his running shoes, building up his endurance until he puts in up to 100 miles per week. While running these long distances he continues to shave more seconds off his time.

### July

July is the last month before the track season starts. By this time, Airman Romero has built up his strength and endurance and begins to practice for the meets. He sprints the distances he'll eventually run and works to improve his times.